

# Star SPOTLIGHT



## Boycott's bad prophecy

Former England captain Geoffrey Boycott had joked in his match commentary on the third day of the Abu Dhabi Test that he would sell his three houses if England lost.

Little did he know that Day 4 would turn the fortunes in Pakistan's favour.

Andrew Strauss's side was bundled out for 72 to lose the Abu Dhabi Test by 72 runs.

"I have lost all my houses, you stupid England team. I'm kidding but this was a terrible performance," The BBC quoted Boycott as saying after England lost the



**3 IN 3:** Novak Djokovic lets out a battle cry moments after winning the Australian Open final, his third consecutive major win, by beating Rafael Nadal in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## MATCH STATISTICS

**Time: 5hrs 53mins**  
**Djokovic v Nadal**  
**9 Aces 10**  
**2 Double Faults 4**  
**57 Winners 44**  
**69 Unforced Errors 71**  
**7/20 Break Point**  
**Conversions 4/6**

# DJOKER'S LAST LAUGH

## Downs Nadal in the epic Australian Open final

## Khulna, Sylhet unveil logos

SPORTS REPORTER

Logo unveiling ceremonies of Khulna Royal Bengals and Sylhet Royals were held at a city hotel yesterday.

Orion Group hosted the first one in the afternoon with skipper Shakib Al Hasan on show for the Khulna franchise in the Bangladesh Premier League, wearing the team jersey as well as revealing the team's logo.

Later Shakib told the media that he has enough confidence in the team for a good outcome. "We have a good team and a good result is possible with it. We have some performers outside the national team," he told the reporters.

He also urged the supporters to back Khulna in the Twenty20 competition, especially those from the home division.

Chairman of Orion Group Obaidul Karim, managing director Salman Obaidul Karim and some of the players were also present on the occasion.

Walton Group then hosted the Sylhet Royals' ceremony quite lavishly too with Finance Minister AMA Muhith doing the honours with the players and team owners.

Some of the Sylhet Royals' foreign players were also present with Peter Trego and Kamran Akmal showing up for the franchise.

## Brutality takes over sanity

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

A petty incident took the life of a teenage cricketer on Saturday in Kishoreganj. The boy identified as Nazrul Islam (15), son of Abdur Rahman of Batrish Bilpara area, was hit with a bat by the match umpire Rafiqul Islam (16) during an altercation regarding a decision and succumbed to an internal haemorrhage the following day.

Police and local sources said Nazrul ran onto the pitch and started an argument with Rafiqul before the latter took one of the players' bats and hit Nazrul on the head

AP, Melbourne



Novak Djokovic wore down Rafael Nadal in the longest Grand Slam singles final in the history of professional tennis, winning 5-7, 6-4, 6-2, 6-7 (5), 7-5 after 5 hours, 53 minutes to claim his third Australian Open title.

Djokovic sealed victory at 1.37am Monday local time and became the fifth man since the Open Era began in 1968 to win three straight Grand Slam titles.

The 24-year-old Djokovic tore off his shirt in celebration after one of the most dramatic finals in the history of the game. He went to his support camp and repeatedly thumped the side of the arena in front of them in delight and relief.

Nadal leaned on the net, while Djokovic sat on his haunches before the trophy presentation. Eventually, nearby officials took pity and they were given chairs and a bottle of water each.

"We made history tonight and unfortunately there couldn't be two winners,"

Djokovic said. Djokovic's win maintained his mastery of Nadal, who has lost seven straight finals against the Serb since March last year.

In the most devastating of circumstances, Nadal became the first man in the Open Era to lose three straight major finals. He lost in four sets to Djokovic at last year's Wimbledon and US Open.

Having reduced Roger Federer to tears when he won the title over five sets in 2009, Nadal maintained his composure during the on-court speeches and even managed a joke.

"Good morning, everybody," Nadal said, earning laughs and loud applause from the crowd. "Congratulations to Novak and his team. They deserve it. They are doing something fantastic, so congratulations."

After coming back from 5-3 down to win the fourth-set tiebreaker, Nadal was up a break at 4-2 in the fifth set against Djokovic, who seemed to be tiring.

But the No. 1-ranked Djokovic, who needed almost five hours to win his semifinal against Andy Murray, somehow responded. He broke for a 6-5 lead and saved a break point before

finally claiming the win. The previous longest major singles final was Mats Wilander's win over Ivan Lendl at the US Open in 1988, which lasted 4 hours, 54 minutes.

The longest Australian Open final also involved Wilander in 1988, when the Swede beat Pat Cash. Sunday's match was also the longest in the tournament's history.

A tense, error-strewn opening set offered no indication of the high drama to follow. In hot, humid conditions, both players struggled for consistency.

After an exchange of breaks, Nadal took it after 80 minutes two minutes short of the entire women's final the previous day.

Nadal had only lost one match of his previous 134 in Grand Slams after winning the first set, but he found his serve coming under increasing pressure as the match wore on.

As if to demonstrate the pervading tension of the occasion, Djokovic double-faulted at break point down while serving for the second set at 5-3 before Nadal returned the favor by double-faulting in the next game to give the Serb the second set.

By the time Djokovic took a 3-1 lead in the third set, Nadal's shoulders were visibly slumping and he was talking to himself more often, unable to stop his opponent peppering the baseline with his returns to take control of the points.

At 5-2, his uncle and coach Toni Nadal moved to the front row of the players' box to try to get some positive messages to his nephew. It didn't work. Nadal lost his serve against love.

But in the fourth set, Nadal dug in, drawing on his renowned fighting spirit, and the match really came alive when he recovered from 0-40 down in the eighth game with two spectacular winners, two unreturnable serves and an ace.

Then came a rain shower and a brief delay for the roof to close, robbing Nadal of his momentum.

He regained it the tiebreaker, though, reeling off four straight points from 5-3 down, taking the match into a decider when Djokovic's forehand dropped wide.

The tennis, almost unbelievably, seemed to improve in the fifth set as the match ticked

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## BPL tickets go on sale from today

SPORTS REPORTER

Tickets for the Bangladesh Premier League T20 will be on sale from today.

The tickets will be available in 23 Dhaka Bank branches across the country, thirteen of which are in the capital.

Branches in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, Barisal, Rajshahi, Bogra and Khulna will also sell tickets.

Shihab Trading chairman Salim H Chowdhury will hand over the first ticket to the buyer at the bank's Dhanmondi branch.

Dhaka Bank managing director Khondoker Fazle Rashid will also be present on the occasion.

## Security team visit mid-Feb

SPORTS REPORTER

Shafiq Anwar, the National Sports Council secretary, will be among the eight-member security team that is set to leave for Pakistan in mid-February.

The other representatives may also include a deputy secretary as well as officials from the home ministry and police force. A director of the Bangladesh Cricket Board and its security advisor will also be in the team that will assess the current security situation in Pakistan.

A security team will leave on either February 13 or 14.

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(L) Finance Minister AMA Muhith (5th from L) unveils BPL franchisee Sylhet Royals' logo and (R) Orion Group chairman Obaidul Karim bowls to Khulna icon player Shakib Al Hasan during Khulna Royal Bengals' logo unveiling at a city hotel yesterday.



PHOTOS: STAR

## Mohammedan raise spending bar

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan SC's remarkable spending to form a formidable hockey team has seemingly prompted other clubs to increase their budgets ahead of the upcoming inter-club players' transfers, scheduled for February 26-28.

Mohammedan heated up the pre-transfer market by confirming the services of national striker Rasel Mahmud Jimmy and national defender Mamunur Rahman Chayan at record payment of Tk 6 Lakh and Tk 6.5 lakh respectively.

The Black and Whites, who aim to defend their league title, are reportedly spending Tk 60 lakhs to sign 15 local players and another Tk 40 lakhs for five foreign players as they have sketched an overall budget of more than Tk one crore.

Abahani, who emerged joint champions last season, have

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## Solace for back-room staff

SPORTS REPORTER



As far as sporting events in the country are concerned, there has been none like the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) when it comes to gaudiness and big money and whatever comes with the two.

New sources of money have entered the country's cricket which has been given the red-carpet treatment by the Bangladesh Cricket Board. The franchise owners have been excitable, beginning to market their team and the cricketers in a bid to raise their brand value. Some have even taken a garish path, leaving some of their subjects cringing at times.

The cricketers too have welcomed the arrival of BPL. The first ball is still eleven days away but even at this stage, the Twenty20 extravaganza has been the major talking point among past and present cricketers.

One of the reasons for this chatter is, apart from the money, the larger scope of work available with lucrative money.

Cricket has largely had just the one workplace, the national team. This has meant that positions for the coach, trainer, physiotherapist, specialist coaches and selectors have been filled up quite easily, leaving the rest to fend for positions in the domestic competitions. The National Cricket League has opened up the market somewhat but it still remained quite narrow.

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